

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 SY-05 MCT-02 HA-05 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 TRSE-00
COME-00 EB-08 ACDA-12 AID-05 USSS-00 /088 W
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O 211800Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5449
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 08388

BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: N.A.
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SP
SUBJECT: FIRST REACTION TO ASSASSINATION OF ARMY OFFICERS

REF: MADRID 8332 NOTAL

1. SUMMARY: THIS MORNING'S ASSASSINATIONS CONSTITUTE
A MARKED ESCALATION OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND AN UN-
PRECEDENTED ATTACK ON SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS. THE
COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE QUICKLY RESPONDED,
HOWEVER, BY TELLING A SOMBER CONGRESS OF DEPUTIES AND
A SHOCKED NATION THAT THEY WILL NOT ALLOW SUCH VIOLENCE
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TO DIVERT THEM FROM THE DEMOCRATIZATION TASK AT HAND
AND THAT THEY FULLY INTEND TO MOVE AHEAD WITH THE
CONSTITUTION. MILITARY CIRCLES TODAY REPORTEDLY ARE
THE SCENE OF CONSIDERABLE CONCERN, NERVOUSNESS ABOUT
THEIR PERSONAL SECURITY AND ANGER, BUT WE DO NOT
BELIEVE THIS WILL TRANSLATE INTO ANY ATTEMPT TO
INTERVENE DIRECTLY IN POLITICS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE ASSASSINATION IN MADRID THIS MORNING OF GEN. SANCHEZ RAMOS-IZQUIERDO AND LT. COL PEREZ RODRIGUEZ (REFTEL) HAS SHOCKED THE COUNTRY AND CAST A PALL OVER THE CONGRESS OF DEPUTIES, WHICH MET TODAY FOR WHAT MAY BE THE FINAL DAY OF THAT CHAMBER'S CONSIDERATION OF THE CONSTITUTION. SUAREZ AND THE LEADERS OF THE MAJOR PARTIES AND PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS (INCLUDING FELIPE GONZALEZ, FRAGA, CARRILLO AND LEADERS OF THE BASQUE PNV), IN AN UNUSUAL NATIONAL TELEVISION HOOK-UP FROM THE CORTES, MADE THE NOW RITUAL SPEECHES OF CONDOLENCE TO THE FAMILIES; CONDEMNATION OF SUCH AN ATTACK AGAINST THE INSTITUTION OF THE ARMED FORCES, THE STATE, AND DEMOCRACY ITSELF; AND REAFFIRMATION OF THEIR COMMITMENT TO CARRY ON WITH THE TRANSITION AND TO MOVE AHEAD FORTHWITH ON THE CONSTITUTION. IN THIS REGARD, IT WAS WIDELY NOTED THAT FIRST VICE PRESIDENT/DEFENSE MINISTER GUTIERREZ MELLADO, WHO NORMALLY ATTENDS PLENARIES IN CIVILIAN ATTIRE, CAME TO TODAY'S SOMBER SESSION IN UNIFORM.

3. THE AFTERNOON PRESS HAS BEEN QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT THIS IS THE FIRST SUCH ATTACK AGAINST A PURELY MILITARY SENIOR OFFICER SINCE THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, AND IS THEREFORE A CLEAR-CUT CASE OF AGGRESSION AGAINST THE INSTITUTION OF THE ARMED FORCES (IN CONTRAST TO THE ASSASSINATION OF CARRERO BLANCO, WHO ALSO WAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESIDENT OF GOVT, OR OF NAVARRESE ARMED POLICE CHIEF IMAZ, WHO WAS A LEADER OF THE PUBLIC ORDER FORCES, NOT JUST A MILITARY OFFICER). MILITARY CIRCLES WERE UNDERSTANDABLY BUZZING WITH CONCERN, NERVOUSNESS AND ANGER TODAY. THERE IS SPECULATION IN THE PRESS THAT THE ASSAILANTS HAD ACTUALLY MISCALCULATED, AND HAD INTENDED TO ASSASSINATE DEPUTY ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF GONZALEZ DEL YERRO, WHO LIVES IN THE SAME BUILDING WHERE RAMOS-IZQUIERDO RESIDED.

4. MADRID'S "DIARIO 16" REPORTS IT RECEIVED A CALL AT MID-DAY CLAIMING THAT A HERETOFORE UNKNOWN EXTREMIST ORGANIZATION, THE PROLETARIAN ARMED GROUPS (GRUPOS ARMADOS PROLETARIOS), WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ASSASSINATIONS. BUT THIS REMAINS FAR FROM CLEAR. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO APPARENT CONNECTION, POLICE NEAR SAN SEBASTIAN AND IN SEVILLE ALSO WERE ASSAULTED TODAY. IN BEASAIN (GUIPUZCOA) TWO OF THREE CIVIL GUARDS TRAVELING IN A LAND ROVER WERE SLIGHTLY INJURED WHEN THEY WERE FIRED ON BY UNIDENTIFIED ASSAILANTS, WHILE IN SEVILLE, A MUNICIPAL POLICEMAN WAS SHOT AND GRAVELY WOUNDED.

5. COMMENT: WHILE THE IDENTITY OF THE ASSASSINS REMAINS UNCERTAIN, THEIR PURPOSE IS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR. THEY WANT TO PUSH THE MILITARY INTO OVERREACTING, AND INTERVENING IN POLITICS, BY ATTACKING THE INSTITUTION OF THE ARMED FORCES FRONTALLY, AT A TIME THAT INFLUENTIAL SECTORS OF THE ARMED FORCES ARE MORE THAN USUALLY CONCERNED ABOUT NATIONAL UNITY. SIGNIFICANTLY, THE ASSASSINATIONS COME ON THE LAST SCHEDULED DAY OF CONGRESS CONSIDERATION OF THE CONSTITUTION; AT A TIME WHEN THE GOVT AND THE BASQUE PNV STILL HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THE AUTONOMY PROVISIONS; AND ONLY 4 DAYS AFTER THE MILITARY CHIEFS OF STAFF HELD A LENGTHY MEETING WITH SUAREZ ON JULY 17, DURING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHICH IT IS BELIEVED THEY VENTED THEIR CONCERNS OVER THE POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL UNITY OF

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AUTONOMY CONCESSIONS TO THE PNV.

6. THIS DESPERATE ESCALATION OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IS SURE TO KEEP THE WATERS ROILED HERE AT LEAST FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS. BUT AS SUAREZ TODAY REMINDED THE CONGRESS -- AND THE COUNTRY -- DESPERATE ACTS OF VIOLENCE HAVE ACCOMPANIED ALMOST EVERY CRUCIAL STEP IN THE TRANSITION. ALTHOUGH THIS IS PERHAPS THE MOST DISTURBING ASSASSINATION WE HAVE HAD IN SPAIN SINCE THE TRANSITION BEGAN, WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS CAPABLE OF REVERSING THE SPANISH MOMENTUM TOWARD DEMOCRACY OR OF CONVINCING THE ARMED FORCES TO TAKE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A MORE PROMINENT ROLE IN SPANISH POLITICS. TODMAN

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